

CHALLENGE MEET SURVIVAL GUIDE

Challenge meets are usually the first “official” meets your swimmer will attend. This is an exciting time for your swimmers as it is the first time for many to compete against swimmers on other teams. It is a time to apply lessons learned in practice to competition against the clock and other swimmers. This guide is designed to help families know what to expect when they get to a meet and to assist families preparing for the challenge meet experience.

How do I enter my swimmer in a challenge meet?

All registrations for meets are done using the TEAM UNIFY system within the King Aquatic Club (KING) website. Once you have logged into the system, you will need to declare you are participating in the meet. Once you declare for the meet, the meet events for which your swimmer is qualified will automatically pop up. Click on the events you would like to swim. Remember to hit save or your entry will not be saved in the system. If your swimmer is not qualified for a meet, you do not need to indicate they are not attending.

Once your entries are in the system the coaches will review them. They will either approve or reject them. If a swimmer's events are “rejected” the coach will select another event for the swimmer. The day after the entry deadline an Entry Report will be posted in the “Meets” page on TEAM UNIFY.

When should I arrive?

It's best to show up at least 15-20 minutes before warm up. This will ensure the following:

- You have somewhere to park. This is often a problem at swim meets (in some cases this will require 30 minutes before warm up). This will be an issue at various meets during the season due limited size of parking lots.
- You get a decent seat. It's no fun sitting by the locker rooms.
- Your swimmers will have time to get changed and prepared so they can get into the pool on time. This is critical as warm ups can be a bit of a zoo.

What do I do at the meet?

If nothing else, you'll have lots of time. Challenge meet sessions will go up to 4 hours. Bring a book, laptop, knitting, scrimshaw or anything else that can occupy you for the 3 hours and fifty minutes your child is not swimming. Some parents use this time to get to know others on the team, while others take the opportunity to list all the reasons, they love their KING coaches. A better alternative (with the possible exceptions of the aforementioned list) is to get involved with the meet and volunteer. Becoming an official or timer is a great way see a meet and get positively involved with the swimmers. If KING is hosting the meet the options get even better. Concession, running the timing system, and a host of other jobs are available and will be critical to the success of the event. KING runs several meets each year. Volunteer information can be found on the KING website.

What should my swimmer do when they are not swimming?

The swimmer's biggest responsibility during meets is to swim to the best of his/her ability. Practice is the biggest single factor in this equation, but on race day each swimmer must be responsible for getting themselves lined up for the correct event in the correct heat and lane. Nothing is more frustrating to a coach than having a swimmer ready to get a best time and then having them miss their event. Athletes miss events for several reasons, but in a highly scientific study conducted by the KING research staff the top reasons for missing events were:

1. Not paying attention
2. In the bathroom
3. At the snack bar
4. In the stands with Mom/Dad

While coaches may assist the younger athletes, it is each swimmer's responsibility to get lined up with enough time to prepare to race (caps & goggles on).

Also important for a swimmer's success is staying hydrated. Most sports drinks are fine for this purpose. Dilute them by 1/2 with water and avoid those with carbonation. For food, stick with light snacks from home. Granola, sports bars, crackers, fruits and veggies are all excellent choices to keep energy up. While many meets do have some healthy fare, the norm is a buffet of sugared snacks, candy and treats covered in glaze, cheese, or sprinkles that have less nutritional value than your average pile of firewood. Most swimmers bring their own food with them.

When swimmers are not racing or eating, they tend to relax and socialize. Card games, reading, and occasionally, homework are all good ways to stay loose. While iPod and CD players are popular, it's important to put them away when swimmers are racing as they sometimes disappear when left out. While this does not happen often, it is not unheard of. I want to be the perfect swim parent.

How do I talk to my swimmer at a meet if they don't swim well?

Excellent question! After a race your swimmer will immediately go to his/her coach for feedback. The coach will go over what the athlete did well and then give feedback on how to improve future performance. After a conference with the coach your swimmer may want to talk with you.

When your child swims well: This is easy. A "good job" or letting them know you're proud of them is just fine. In reality, not a lot needs to be said. They know they've done well and, are usually quite pleased with themselves. Rewards or payments for performance are not recommended and can actually be harmful long term.

When your child does not swim well: This is easy. Tell them "nice try" and let them know that you're proud of them. They just came from a coach who let them know what they need to do to improve. As a group, the KING coaches are an honest lot, and tend to be so with swimmers about sub-par performance. What swimmers need from parents is unconditional support and acceptance.

What else do I need to know?

Dress for the pool temperature. Take a building kept at 80 degrees and full of water, then add 400 people and shut them in for 10 hours a day. It gets hot in the pool. You will not want your ski jacket. You'll notice most of the coaches and officials in shorts. There's a reason for it.

Bring a sharpie or other permanent marker. They're useful for writing your swimmer's events on their hands or arms. This way they have instant access to all event, heat and lane information. After event, heat, and lane information has been recorded on your swimmer, please take away the marker. Nothing good happens when 10-year olds have sharpies for 3 hours at a time.

Make sure your swimmer brings extra clothes and towels. Believe it or not, everything gets wet. You heard it here first. This is really a swimmer's responsibility, but the younger swimmers may need a little help for the first few meets.

Above all else, Challenge meets need to be a fun, productive experience for your swimmers. Meets are opportunities for your swimmer to show off all the work and practice he/she put in during the weeks preceding the meet. If you have any other questions, please feel free to contact your coach.